

*Electoral Boundaries*

It has never been my experience that the constituents I have the honour to represent, at least those residing within the city of Calgary, demand absolute parity with all other constituents and electors in the province of Alberta. They did not have what you might call a greedy attitude to representation. I know that *Toronto Star* editorial writers think there is magic to the idea of representation by population. The point is that the people of Alberta feel that their province is under-represented in this chamber, whereas the central provinces are not. I think one should remember the vast area of land which the member representing a rural riding in Alberta must service. The population of such an area is much more spread out than the population in an urban riding or in a mixed urban and rural riding.

● (1620)

I sympathize with the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River who presented this bill. If the editorial writers of the *Toronto Star* had their way, the area of northern Ontario from which he comes would be represented by half the present number of members. We cannot represent this country properly if we follow such suggestions.

I urge hon. members to pass this bill which is to amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, and give the act itself a chance to work properly. If Bill C-370 does not accomplish its intended purpose, parliament will have another chance to consider the matter. As things now stand, members feel frustrated. We are engaged in a redistribution process at present, and it is imperative that we give the law of the land a chance to work as it should and as it was intended to work by those who passed it in 1964. I ask the House not to support the suggestion of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). Let us not send this legislation back to committee, but let us read it the third time and thereby amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, as proposed.

**Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I will not take up much of the time of the House. I sympathize with the sentiments of the hon. member who does not wish this bill to be referred back to committee. I endorse his thoughts.

I remember what happened in my own case when a commission last reviewed boundary lines in British Columbia. I remember the strange things that happened about boundary borders. There was a certain readjustment of borders and locations on geographic lines. I remember going with two others to the commission. One was an incumbent member of parliament who wanted to impose his brand of political philosophy on the commission; I was the second person, and, as a candidate, I wanted to impose my political philosophy and views upon the commission; but the third fellow also had his own views. The consensus was that our meeting with the commission was an exercise in frustration.

Afterwards I talked to the secretary of the justice of the peace who had presided over the hearing, and asked what percentage of applicants throughout British Columbia made applications which were geared to and based on political motives, or based on the whim of an individual member of parliament or candidate. The answer was that 99.9 per cent of all submissions fell into that category.

The riding of Kootenay West is very large, and for that reason I sympathize with the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) and can well imagine how long it takes him to get around his riding. I am concerned about some of the ridiculous decisions of commissions. For instance, in a community like Revelstoke they will establish a boundary line down the main street and divide the population in half. Half the people are represented by one member of parliament and half by another. This is ridiculous in a small community.

Sometimes the boundary line is drawn just outside a community, and 10,000 or 15,000 people who work and trade in the community but live just outside must deal, in federal matters, with a member who does not represent the community in which they have an interest. Why could the boundary not be drawn logically, say, through an area with the lowest population density? Why divide a village, town or relatively small community? I recognize that large urban centres like Toronto and Vancouver must be divided into constituencies. But, in smaller communities, why not draw the border in a way which will affect the least number of people? Why not follow land contours, say, or a stream?

In my riding, for some strange reason—and I do not want my constituents to think that I object—I must travel north for about 100 miles and then 25 miles south, across to Arrow Lake and down into the community of Edgewood. The only way I can determine if I am in my riding is by knocking on farm doors and asking the people where they vote. If they vote in Edgewood, I say fine. If they vote in Lumby I know I am in the wrong riding. That shows how strangely our borders are established.

Not enough thought is given to the drawing of rural riding boundaries. The commission seems to establish boundaries according to factors other than geography. Little consideration is shown for the member who is to serve the riding, no matter what his politics are. If a member is to represent his people, he should be able to do a good job. More attention should be paid to how a member is to serve his riding, to how far he must travel within it, and under what conditions. These things must be taken into consideration. I would rather see them considered here then considered by a commission after a boundary is drawn.

I do not like the idea of appearing before a commission and asking for a boundary change. The motives of people who do this, even in all sincerity, may be suspect. The commissioners have their work to do. They should receive input with respect to the establishing of boundaries before boundaries are established, not afterwards; but that has been the practice.

Commissions establish boundaries; then we talk to them, and they alter those boundaries by 2 or 3 per cent. That is ridiculous, and you end up looking foolish in front of the public. The commissioners view submissions as being entirely politically motivated. In my view, the present process is wrong. I support the principle of the bill put forward by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River and do not support the proposal by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) to refer this bill back to committee.